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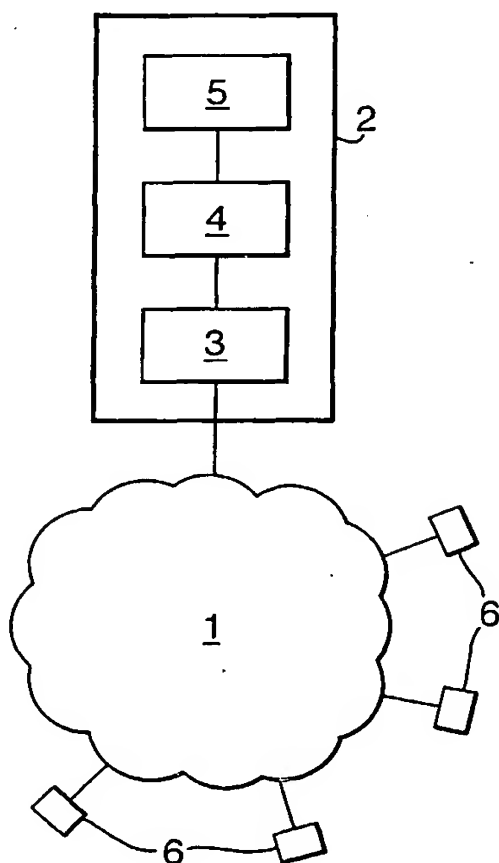
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(54) Title: GAME PLAYING APPARATUS AND METHOD



(57) Abstract: Game playing apparatus comprises a central processor (4) for generating a set of target indicia to be guessed by a player; and a communications interface (3) to enable the central processor to communicate with one or more players. The central processor (4) is adapted, in response to a player request, to a) generate a set of target indicia, b) receive a set of play indicia from the player via the communications interface; c) compare the two sets of indicia, and, di) if the comparison satisfies first predetermined criteria, to indicate a successful match, or dii) if the comparison satisfies second predetermined criteria, less stringent than the first predetermined criteria, to advise the player of this condition and allow the player to submit a new or modified set of indicia and then to repeat steps c) and d) at least once.

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GAME PLAYING APPARATUS AND METHOD

The invention relates to game playing apparatus and a method of operating such apparatus.

5 Lottery games are well known and typically involve the purchase of a lottery ticket from a retail store or the like, the lottery ticket bearing the customer's choice of lottery numbers which are then entered into a lottery competition. A lottery target number is subsequently drawn
10 and those people with exact or near matches win prizes.

 A drawback of conventional lottery games of this type is the need for players to visit retail premises in order to purchase a ticket. There have therefore been some proposals to enable players to enter into lottery games
15 using a remote terminal such as a telephone.

 For example, WO-A-89/02139 discloses a lottery system which uses the public switched telephone network to enable players to enter a lottery and, if there is a match or near match, the customer is advised of a win.

20 Irish Patent No. S80768 discloses an on-line, real time lottery game in which a player can enter a lottery number via his telephone.

 A further example of an on-line, automatic wagering system is described in International Technology
25 Disclosures, Vol. 10, No. 7, 20 July 1992 (Disclosure No. 079201).

 All these on-line lottery games simply mimic the conventional lottery game and there is a need to provide a lottery game having more interest for the player but with
30 the advantages of on-line play.

 In accordance with a first aspect of the present invention, game playing apparatus comprises a central processor for generating a set of target indicia to be guessed by a player; and a communications interface to
35 enable the central processor to communicate with one or more players, wherein the central processor is adapted, in response to a player request, to

- a) generate a set of target indicia,
- b) receive a set of play indicia from the player via the communications interface;
- c) compare the two sets of indicia; and,
- 5 di) if the comparison satisfies first predetermined criteria, to indicate a successful match, or
- dii) if the comparison satisfies second predetermined criteria, less stringent than the first predetermined criteria, to advise the player of this condition and allow
- 10 the player to submit a new or modified set of indicia and then to repeat steps c) and d) at least once.

In accordance with a second aspect of the present invention, a method of operating game playing apparatus according to the first aspect of the present invention

15 comprises detecting a request from a player to play the game; generating a set of target indicia, receiving a set of play indicia from the player; comparing the two sets of indicia; and, if the comparison satisfies first predetermined criteria, indicating a successful match, or

20 if the comparison satisfies second predetermined criteria, less stringent than the first predetermined criteria, advising the player of this condition and allowing the player to submit a new or modified set of indicia and repeating the comparison step.

25 In accordance with a third aspect of the present invention, a method of playing a game comprises:

- i) contacting game playing apparatus which generates a set of secret target indicia and entering a set of play indicia;
- 30 iia) receiving an indication of a successful match, or
- iib) if there is not a successful match, receiving an indication of a partial match and thereafter entering further play indicia in an attempt to improve the match.

The new invention allows a game to be developed which

35 has considerably more interest for the player, allowing the player to apply intelligent puzzle type logic in order to win and yet is simple to operate. Thus, in contrast to a

conventional lottery game where the player is allowed one attempt which either wins or loses, in the new invention the player is allowed to attempt to improve his play and in some cases may be given one or more clues as to the success of previous attempts. Typically, the more attempts he requires, the lower the value of any prize which is awarded if he is finally successful.

The second predetermined criteria can take a variety of forms. In one example which is particularly preferred where players must select a group of six indicia from a choice of ten, the second predetermined criteria are satisfied if at least two play indicia are the same as two of the target indicia.

In other examples, the second predetermined criteria may be set more stringently such as requiring at least three or more play indicia to be the same as corresponding numbers of target indicia.

In the preferred version, the player simply needs to match the play and target indicia. In a more advanced apparatus, the second predetermined criteria are satisfied if at least two of the play indicia are the same as and in the same position in the sequence of indicia as corresponding target indicia.

In some cases, the same second predetermined criteria may be applied at each iteration of step dii) and for example a maximum may be set on the number of repeats allowed. In an alternative approach, the second predetermined criteria are set to be more stringent on each repeat of step dii). This produces a more interesting game of skill for the player.

Further interest may be achieved where step dii) includes advising the player of at least one of the correctly guessed play indicia.

A further drawback of on-line lottery games is that it is difficult for the player to have confidence in the target indicia set by the central processor since, in contrast to conventional public lottery games, these target

indicia will not normally be published. In accordance with a fourth aspect of the present invention, therefore, game playing apparatus comprises a central processor for generating a set of target indicia to be guessed by a player; and a communications interface to enable the central processor to communicate with one or more players, wherein the central processor is adapted, in response to a player request, to generate a set of target indicia and to allocate an identifier to the target indicia and optionally to the game involving the target indicia, to enable a player subsequently to learn details of the target indicia after the game has been played.

By allocating an identifier at least to the target indicia, it is possible for the player to find out details of the target indicia when he does not win.

Separate identifiers may be used for the target indicia on the one hand and the game on the other but conveniently the same identifier is used to identify both.

A variety of indicia can be used in the invention. Conveniently, the indicia comprise alphanumeric characters, preferably single numeric digits since these can be most conveniently entered via a telephone keypad. The use of double digits would require some means of distinguishing between each entry unless it was required that all entries should be double digits and this would then require the entry of a "1" to be entered as "01" etc.

The communications interface may enable communication via a variety of communication networks including the public switched telephone network, the Internet and other wide area networks. This enables the game playing apparatus to be located remote from the players, possibly even in a different country from the players.

In addition to the telephone based version of the game, the game concept can be replicated in a cellular environment bringing graphical game progress data to the Liquid Crystal Displays of cellular phones utilising Wireless Application Protocol (WAP). The ubiquitous data

interface recently introduced to facilitate a cellular based Internet messaging system. The game principles can also be replicated in an Internet environment.

In these cases, other types of indicia could be used
5 such as geometric shapes, punctuation characters and the like. The use of a local display also has the advantage that previous sets of play indicia can be maintained on the display during the play of the game for ease of reference by the player. Each display may also indicate the degree
10 of success in satisfying the second predetermined criteria.

Payment for playing the game could be achieved via a conventional credit card transaction but most conveniently is achieved by requiring players to use premium rate telephone numbers so that payment is achieved automatically
15 via the network provider.

Some examples of game playing apparatus and methods according to the invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:-

Figure 1 is a schematic block diagram of the
20 apparatus;

Figure 2 illustrates part of a local display presented to a player; and,

Figure 3 is a flow diagram illustrating operation of the apparatus.

25 Figure 1 illustrates a communications network 1 such as a PSTN connected to game playing apparatus 2. The apparatus 2 comprises an automatic Interactive Voice Response (IVR) 3, a central processor 4 and a memory 5. A number of remote telephones are indicated at 6.

30 For convenience, the game will be referred to as "Select Six" in this example since it involves the selection of six single digit numbers by the player.

The preferred embodiment is based upon players phoning a premium rate telephone number which costs either £1.00 or
35 £1.50 per minute. Two games which are identical in style and objective exist;

Select Six £1k" to win up to £1,000 costs £1.00 per minute

or

Select Six £5k" to win up to £5,000 costs £1.50 per
5 minute.

Both games provide the opportunity to win cash prizes and optionally tickets into a Daily Prize Draw which provides an additional prize opportunity of up to say £50,000 each day.

10 The objective of both games is to correctly match a pre-determined, winning target set of 6 single digit numbers, by depressing chosen numbers on a telephone keypad. The 6 number winning set needs to be selected from the range of digits numbering 0 - 9 inclusive. Players are
15 required only to match the digits, not the sequence in which they appear. However, in other versions, they could also be required to match the sequence. In each game players are given up to 5 attempts to select the correct combination of 6 numbers. In all games, any digit may
20 appear multiple times in a winning number string.

Contestants will be connected to the IVR system 3 by dialling the appropriate telephone number (step 20, Figure 3). Each game a player plays is allocated its own set of winning numbers, comprising digits 0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9 by
25 the processor 4 (step 25). These selections will be randomly composed and presented to each game from all 5376 possible permutations. Each game in a day is allocated a unique, alphanumeric identity code (ID Code) (step 30), which is given to players as a means of reference for prize
30 collection or failure verification and stored in the memory 5. These ID codes are preallocated to a large number of games and stored in a database.

Players will be connected at random to any one of the 5376 sets of numbers, and are asked to enter their six
35 digit selection into an MF Tone handset (step 35).

On receiving the six digit play indicia, the processor 4 then compares the received play indicia with the selected

target indicia. If there is a complete match, i.e. all six play indicia match a corresponding one of the target indicia (step 40), then a win has been achieved. The processor 4 notes details of the player which may be requested from the player or simply be a record of the player's telephone number (step 45) and the game may end or the player can be offered the chance to play a further game.

If there is not a complete match then the processor 4 determines whether "second criteria" have been satisfied (step 50). If the second criteria are not satisfied then the game stops whereas if they are satisfied, the processor 4 then determines whether a further attempt is to be allowed (step 55) and if it is, processing returns to step 35. Otherwise, the game stops (a new game being offered).

Initially, the second criteria are set to determine whether a player has managed to match two or more of the play numbers with the target numbers. If they have achieved that match, the processor 4 will control the IVR system 3 to advise the player how many numbers they have guessed correctly and the identity of one correct number. Players must guess one extra correct number on each further attempt, to stay in the game (i.e. the "second criteria" become more stringent). Contestants are given up to five attempts to correctly select the identity of the winning set of six numbers.

If players fail to get two correct on their first attempt or if they fail to guess an additional correct number in successive steps the game may stop (as shown) or they may be given the option to play again with a new set of numbers. In the event of success, the prize is dependent and descending based on the number of attempts required to match the six digits.

In addition to the nominated Select Six Prizes, a valuable daily prize draw may be held in which contestants can earn tickets (Entries). The number of Entries being dependent upon progress achieved in the game.

Number Verification

The winning target number sets and their related ID Codes are generated by computer at midnight for the next 24 hours and are printed and held securely by a Bank. For the purposes of verification and/or dispute, the previous days' numbers with their exclusive ID codes can be displayed on a web site or made available by post/fax on request. It is feasible that another premium rate dial in service will allow contestants to reveal the winning numbers on presentation of the ID Code (typically on the next day when it no longer relates to a current winning target) or it may be decided that the game process itself can provide the identity of the winning numbers as an option to all players who lose.

15 An example of how prizes are allocated in the £1.00 per minute game is as follows:

Matching the winning set of six numbers:

In the First attempt wins: £1000.00* prize plus four free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw

20 In the Second attempt wins: £250.00 * prize plus four free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw

In the Third attempt wins: £100.00* prize plus four free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw

25 In the Fourth attempt wins: £25.00* prize plus four free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw

In the Fifth attempt wins: £5.00 * prize plus four free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw

Getting to the Fourth attempt but losing wins two Free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw

30 Getting to the Fifth attempt but losing wins three Free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw

An example of how prizes are allocated in the £1.50 per minute game is as follows:

Matching the winning set of six numbers

35 In the First attempt: £5000.00* prize plus six free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw

In the Second attempt wins: £500.00 * prize plus six free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw

In the Third attempt wins: £100.00* prize plus six free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw

5 In the Fourth attempt wins: £50.00* prize plus six free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw

In the Fifth attempt wins: £5.00* prize plus six free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw

10 Getting to the Fourth attempt but losing wins four Free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw

Getting to the Fifth attempt but Losing wins five Free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw

The method will now be described in more detail.

15 Stage 1

The player keys in his first selection of 6 digits using keys 0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 and 9.

20 If all six digits entered match the winning, 6-number string to which the player has been connected, the player immediately wins either the £1000.00 or £5000.00 prize and six free entries into the Daily Prize Draw.

25 If the digits entered by the player contain less than two matching numbers (i.e. None or One) in the winning set to which they are randomly connected, they will be told that they have failed to progress to the next level and invited to enter a new game with a new set of numbers. This may continue ad infinitum, however test statistics have demonstrated that 83% players will get two or more numbers correct on their first attempt.

30 If the Stage 1 digits entered by the player contain two or more correct numbers, they will be advised how many digits have achieved a match and will be supplied the identity of one of the numbers.

35 If there are three numbers matched, the player will pass immediately to Stage 3. For four numbers correct, the player will pass immediately to Stage 4, and with five numbers correct, straight to Stage 5.

Note: Winners at any stage of the game will be automatically transferred by the IVR 3 to an agent in a call centre to provide address and payment preferences. All winners may also receive either four or six free entries into the Daily Prize Draw in addition to the cash prize. Players who are successful in getting to Stage 4 or Stage 5 and then lose are also transferred to the call centre to register their Free Entries in the Daily Prize Draw.

Stage 2

To reach this stage, the player will have matched two numbers correctly and the identity of one of them will have been advised to him. Based on this information, the player is requested to enter a new selection of six digits using keys 0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9.

If all 6 digits entered at Stage 2 match the winning, 6-number string to which the player has been connected, the player immediately wins a prize whose value depends on the number of previous attempts (the more attempts, the lower the prize value).

If the player increases the number of correct selections by one, he will be told he now has three numbers correct, the system will re-confirm the identity of the correct number originally advised during Stage 1 and progress to Stage 3.

If there are four numbers matched, the player will pass immediately to Stage 4. For five numbers correct, the player will pass immediately to Stage 5.

If, during stage 2 the player fails to select an additional correct digit in the winning set to which they are randomly connected, they will be advised that they have failed and given an option to "play again" with a new set of numbers.

Stage 3

To reach this stage, the player will have matched three numbers correctly and the identity of one of them will have previously been advised to him. Based on this
5 information, the player is requested to enter a new selection of 6 digits using keys 0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9.

If all six digits entered at Stage 3 match the winning, 6-number string to which the player has been connected, the player immediately wins a prize whose value
10 depends on the number of previous attempts.

If the player increases the number of correct selections by one, he will be told he now has four numbers correct, the system will re-confirm the identity of the correct number originally advised during Stage 1 and the
15 player may progress to Stage 4.

If there are five numbers matched, the player will pass immediately to the final Stage 5.

If the player fails to select an additional correct digit in the winning set to which are randomly connected,
20 they will be advised that they have failed and given an option to "play again" with a new set of numbers.

Stage 4

To reach this stage, the player will have matched four
25 numbers correctly and the identity of one of them will have been advised to him. Based on this information, the player is requested to enter a new selection of six digits using keys 0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9.

If all six digits entered at Stage 4 match the winning, 6-number string to which the player has been
30 connected, the player immediately wins a prize whose value depends on the number of previous attempts.

If the player increases the number of correct selections by one, he will be told he now has five numbers
35 correct, the system will re-confirm the identity of the correct number originally advised during Stage 1 and progress to Stage 5.

If the player fails to select an additional correct digit in the winning set to which are randomly connected, they will be advised that they have failed to win a cash prize but that they have won two free tickets into the
5 Daily Prize Draw in the £1k game or four free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw in the £5k game. They will be transferred to the call centre to Register their prizes.

Final Stage 5

10 To reach this stage, the player will have matched five numbers correctly and the identity of one of them will have been advised to him. Based on this information, the player is requested to enter a new selection of six digits using keys 0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9.

15 If all six digits entered at Stage 5 match the winning, 6-number string to which the player has been connected, the player immediately wins a prize whose value depends on the number of previous attempts.

If the player fails to select an additional correct
20 digit in the winning set to which he is randomly connected, he will be advised that he has failed to win a cash prize but that they have won three free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw in the £1k game or five free Entries into the Daily Prize Draw in the £5k game. They will be transferred
25 to the call centre to Register their prizes.

Daily Prize Draw

The existence of the Daily prize draw allows the game to advertise a much higher prize level than is possible in
30 the game itself. Equally it is an incentive for players to continue playing despite a reducing prize level in the Select Six architecture. The difficulty in setting the prize level is identical to the challenge of the National Lottery which has a variable prize fund each week.

35 It will be clearly apparent to the skilled reader that many variations of the game described are possible. For example, instead of numbers, other symbols such as

alphanumeric symbols could be used and if the game were to be implemented using the Internet, pictorial symbols could be used. In the preferred example, progression at the first attempt is only allowed if two numbers are correct.
5 However, this could be increased to three or four or more in some cases.

In the example described, players take part in the game using a telephone handset. Examples of the game could also be implemented in which the users use displays such as
10 a PC monitor or WAP cellular phone. In these examples, information from the apparatus 2 can be displayed rather than provided orally. In addition, this provides a convenient way of allowing a player to see his previous attempts and the degree of success of those previous
15 attempts. An example of such a display is shown in Figure 2. In the first line of the display shown in Figure 2, a player has entered the numerals 1,2,3,4,5,6. Four of these numerals match corresponding target numerals and thus the number of successes is four and the digit 1 is one of those
20 successful matched numerals. This information is therefore displayed alongside the play numerals.

In the second attempt, the player enters the numerals 1,2,4,5,6,7 and this has increased the number of successes to five and again an example of the successful entry is
25 given as the digit 1. Finally, in the third attempt, the player successfully matches all the target numerals and this is indicated by the number of successes being six.

CLAIMS

1. Game playing apparatus comprising a central processor for generating a set of target indicia to be guessed by a player; and a communications interface to enable the central processor to communicate with one or more players, wherein the central processor is adapted, in response to a player request, to
- a) generate a set of target indicia,
 - b) receive a set of play indicia from the player via the communications interface;
 - c) compare the two sets of indicia; and,
 - d) if the comparison satisfies first predetermined criteria, to indicate a successful match, or
 - dii) if the comparison satisfies second predetermined criteria, less stringent than the first predetermined criteria, to advise the player of this condition and allow the player to submit a new or modified set of indicia and then to repeat steps c) and d) at least once.
2. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the second predetermined criteria are satisfied if at least two play indicia are the same as two of the target indicia.
3. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the second predetermined criteria are satisfied if at least two of the play indicia are the same as and in the same position in the sequence of indicia as corresponding target indicia.
4. Apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the second predetermined criteria are set to be more stringent on each repeat of step dii).
5. Apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, wherein step dii) includes advising the player of at least one of the correctly guessed play indicia.
6. Apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the first predetermined criteria are satisfied if all the target indicia are matched by the play indicia.
7. Apparatus according to any of claims 1 to 5, wherein the first predetermined criteria are satisfied if the play

indicia are the same as and are in the same sequence as the target indicia.

8. Apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the central processor is adapted to indicate a prize if the first predetermined criteria are satisfied, the prize value decreasing in accordance with the number of times step d(ii) is performed.

9. Game playing apparatus comprising a central processor for generating a set of target indicia to be guessed by a player; and a communications interface to enable the central processor to communicate with one or more players, wherein the central processor is adapted, in response to a player request, to generate a set of target indicia and to allocate an identifier to the target indicia and optionally to the game involving the target indicia, to enable a player subsequently to learn details of the target indicia after the game has been played.

10. Apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the same identifier is used to identify the target indicia and the game being played.

11. Apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the indicia comprise alphanumeric characters, preferably single numeric digits.

12. Apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the communications interface includes a modem to enable communication between the central processor and the player via a telephone network.

13. Apparatus according to any of claims 1 to 11, wherein the communications interface enables communication between the central processor and the player via an image carrying medium such as the Internet.

14. A method of operating game playing apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, the method comprising detecting a request from a player to play the game; generating a set of target indicia, receiving a set of play indicia from the player; comparing the two sets of indicia; and, if the comparison satisfies first predetermined

criteria, indicating a successful match, or if the comparison satisfies second predetermined criteria, less stringent than the first predetermined criteria, advising the player of this condition and allowing the player to submit a new or modified set of indicia and repeating the comparison step.

15. A method of playing a game comprising:

i) contacting game playing apparatus which generates a set of secret target indicia and entering a set of play indicia;

10 iia) receiving an indication of a successful match, or

 iib) if there is not a successful match, receiving an indication of a partial match and thereafter entering further play indicia in an attempt to improve the match.

16. A method according to claim 15, wherein step iib) includes receiving data defining at least one of the play indicia which matches a corresponding target indicium.

17. A method according to claim 15, wherein step iib) includes receiving data defining at least one of the play indicia which is the same as and in the same location in a sequence as one of the target indicia.

18. A method according to any of claims 15 to 17, wherein in step ii) the indication is provided orally.

19. A method according to any of claims 15 to 18, wherein the indication is provided visually.

20. A method according to any of claims 15 to 19, wherein step i) comprises contacting the game playing apparatus via a communications network such as a public switched telephone network or the Internet.

21. A method according to at least claim 19, further comprising receiving a display of previous unsuccessful attempts, optionally with an indication of the degree of success of those attempts.

22. A method according to any of claims 15 to 21, further comprising receiving an identifier from the game playing apparatus and, following completion of the game, supplying the identifier to the game playing apparatus and receiving

data defining the previously secret target indicia corresponding to that game.

23. A method according to any of claims 15 to 22, wherein the target and play indicia comprise alphanumeric
5 characters, preferably single numeric digits.

24. A method according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the steps are performed using a cellular telephone.

25. A method according to any of claims 15 to 24, further comprising indicating a prize if the first predetermined
10 criteria are satisfied, the prize value decreasing in accordance with the number of times step iib is performed.

26. A method of playing a game according to any of claims 15 to 25, wherein the game playing apparatus is constructed according to any of claims 1 to 13.

1/2

Fig.1.

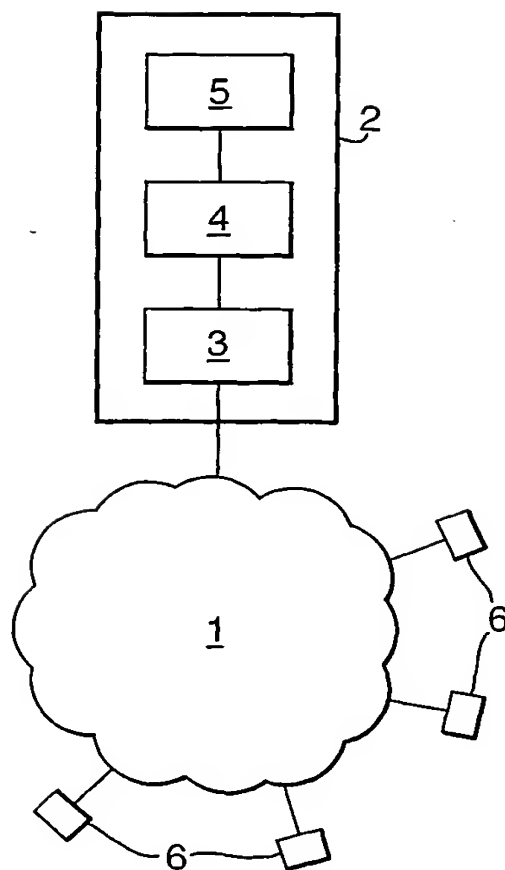
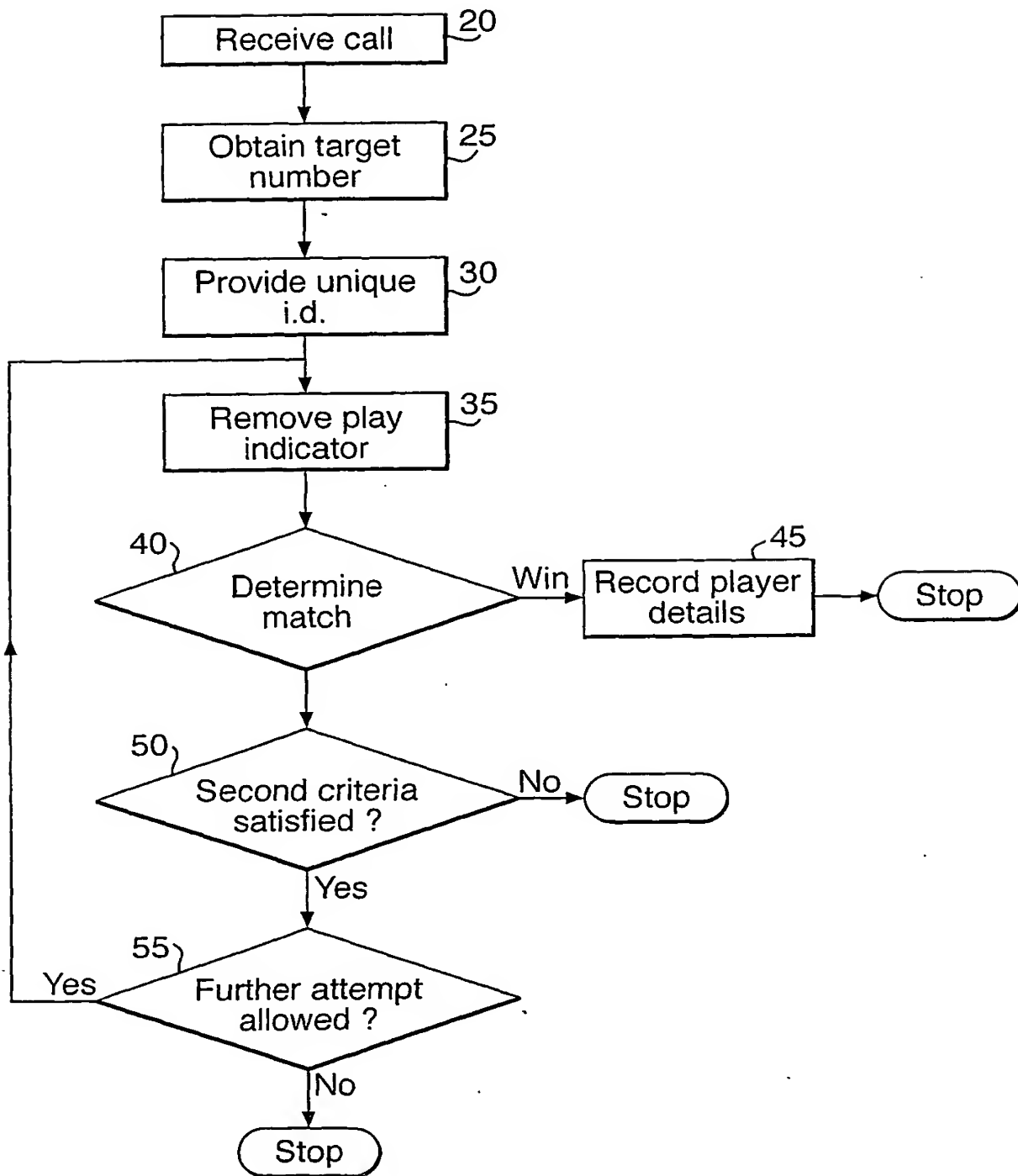


Fig.2.

Play Attempt	No. of Sucesses	Sucessful entry
1 2 3 4 5 6	4	1
1 2 4 5 6 7	5	1
1 1 4 5 6 7	6	

2/2

Fig.3.



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

PCT/GB 01/04046

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 G07F17/32

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 G07F

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

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C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	WO 99 26204 A (SARNO ROBERT A) 27 May 1999 (1999-05-27) page 3, line 10 -page 6, line 12 page 7, line 5 -page 9, line 24 page 11, line 6 - line 22 page 14, line 1 -page 15, line 14 page 18, line 4 - line 13 claim 1 --- -/--	1,6,9, 11-15, 19-23,26



Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.



Patent family members are listed in annex.

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.
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A	US 4 669 730 A (SMALL MAYNARD E) 2 June 1987 (1987-06-02) column 5, line 39 - line 45 column 3, line 30 - line 54 column 8, line 44 - line 47	1,18
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